

WASHINGTON, DC – Oversight and Government Reform Committee Ranking Member Darrell Issa today released a statement on the Committee's investigation into allegations that protection payments are being made to the Taliban through Afghanistan Host Nation Trucking contracts. Tomorrow the Committee's National Security Subcommittee will hold a hearing entitled, "Investigation of Protection Payments for Safe Passage along the Afghan Supply Chain." Rep. Issa's statement is as follows:

"Allegations that our enemies are being bribed through Afghanistan Host Nation Trucking contracts are extremely serious and disturbing. Aiding the Taliban instead of confronting them on the battlefield won't help us achieve our objectives.

"Unfortunately, the Congressional investigation into these accusations has taken an approach that may have unnecessarily jeopardized efforts to find hard evidence of criminal wrongdoing by contractors and incompetence by government officials. I also understand the Department of Defense has informed the committee that some witnesses who spoke with committee investigators are now not cooperating with the Pentagon's criminal probe that predates the committee's investigation.

"Earlier this month, I wrote Chairman Towns to express to him my concern that the Majority was undermining the seriousness and thoroughness of investigations by refusing to record and transcribe witnesses. In the case of this report, more than 30 witnesses -- that we know of -- were questioned with the only record of the interviews being handwritten notes by staff. Moreover, in some instances the Majority was ill-prepared to hear from Afghan witnesses whose testimony is tainted by their failure to procure the services of a qualified translator. From the beginning of this investigation, the Majority has indicated their desire for this to be a bipartisan effort. Regrettably, Republicans have been frustrated by an unwillingness to employ

tools and standards, used for years to investigate allegations of wrongdoing under the Bush Administration and even steroid use in Major League Baseball, which could aid criminal prosecutions and hold high ranking administration officials to account.

"I am committed to making sure that all efforts in Afghanistan are designed to achieve victory and not nurture protracted conflicts. With respect to the Host Nation Trucking Contract, I will continue to direct my staff to pursue this investigation. I do not believe that oversight investigations are incompatible with the Defense Department's own efforts when they involve serious public policy concerns, but I am concerned the way the Majority has conducted this investigation will hurt efforts to address wrongdoing and dysfunction in Afghanistan."

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